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RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 1704
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 2212
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 000935

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [PREF](#) [UNSC](#) [WI](#) [MO](#) [AG](#)
SUBJECT: POLISARIO COMMITTED TO NEGOTIATE BUT WITHOUT VAN
WALSUM

REF: A. STATE 88765
[1](#)B. ALGIERS 483

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Thomas F. Daughton;
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In response to ref A demarche, Polisario Ambassador to Algeria Ibrahim Ghali told us on August 24 that the Sahrawi leadership is firmly committed to continuing negotiations with Morocco in the near future but only if a new moderator approved by the United Nations Secretary General replaced Peter Van Walsum. Noting that Van Walsum's contract had expired, Ghali stated expressly that the Polisario "would not participate" in a fifth round of talks if Van Walsum remained part of the process. Ghali confirmed that the Polisario had expressed this position formally in a letter to the UN Secretary General on "August 8 or 9" but had not yet received an answer. Ghali said the Polisario leadership had heard "various American names" discussed as possible replacements for Van Walsum, adding that the Polisario was open to new mediation "provided it was serious, non-political and endorsed by the UN Secretary General." Ghali's comments come against the backdrop of the Sahrawi "political and cultural caravan" across Algeria, a headline-grabbing August road show of cultural groups and senior officials led by Polisario President Mohamed Abdelaziz that has already visited 45 of Algeria's 48 provinces. During the tour on August 20, Abdelaziz stated publicly the Sahrawi determination to negotiate with Morocco, and Ghali told us that "only when we realize we have reached the clear end of the negotiation process" the Polisario would hold an extraordinary congress to decide whether to change tactics.
END SUMMARY.

NEGOTIATIONS AS A MEANS, NOT AN END

[1](#)2. (C) Ghali cautioned that, while the Polisario was clear in its commitment to continue negotiations, talks "must be a means rather than an end," pointing out that because of what the Polisario considered to be Van Walsum's "inconsistent and biased" role, the talks had become unproductive. Ghali stated unequivocally that the Polisario accepted the Moroccan plan as one of many plans for discussion, but that it must not be the only one. He called Van Walsum's injection of

human rights considerations into prior Manhasset negotiation rounds "unbalanced," as he had "failed to acknowledge daily Moroccan human rights violations" committed against the Sahrawi people on the Moroccan side of the berm. Ghali told us the Polisario had transmitted its position in favor of negotiations without Van Walsum via an official letter to the UNSYG "on August 8 or 9" and that he expected "a favorable response" in time.

ALGERIAN POSITION "CONSISTENT WITH OURS"

13. (C) Abdallah Baali, who has been leading the Algerian delegation at the Manhasset talks, was recently nominated to be Algerian ambassador to the United States. Ghali hailed him as "a good friend and genuine diplomat" and said that the Algerian government had not yet decided who would lead its delegation to a next round of negotiations. Ghali noted that his most recent discussions with MFA Minister-delegate for African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel had highlighted the extent to which the Polisario and Algerian were equally committed to a negotiation process without Van Walsum.

14. (C) Ghali stated that the Polisario was "aware of possible U.S. mediators" who could replace Van Walsum, and told us the Polisario would welcome this step even though "our experience after the political failure of the Baker effort makes us hesitate." A new moderator, he concluded, must be "non-political and unaffected by U.S. elections" and have the support of the UN Secretary General in order for the negotiations to proceed.

EVERY WOMAN EVERY MAN, JOIN THE CARAVAN

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15. (C) The August 21 edition of French-language daily El Moudjahid, mouthpiece of the Algerian regime, was but one of many newspapers to feature recent coverage of the sizable Sahrawi "political and cultural caravan" making its way across Algeria. Ghali, who has been traveling with the caravan, said the goal is to visit all 48 wilayas (provinces), but that Polisario leadership had decided to save the last three wilayas -- the deep Saharan south -- for after Ramadan. Ghali said that the Sahrawis had organized similar caravans in the past, but "never had it received such support" from the Algerian people, meeting with governors and mayors at every stop and growing en route "as ordinary Algerian citizens joined the caravan."

16. (C) COMMENT: As expressed by Ghali, the Polisario commitment to continued negotiations -- without Van Walsum -- is clear and devoid of any mention of renewed hostilities. Ghali asserted that he consults regularly with and takes guidance from the MFA's Messahel. Although we have yet to find anyone not on summer vacation at the MFA to deliver the demarche to, we assume that the Polisario's position on the issue is, as usual, in lock-step with the Algerian government's.

DAUGHTON